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## Homosexuality : I. Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

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Alexander Deeg and Ferenc Herzig

See also → Preaching; → Sermons

## Homoousios

The Greek term *homoousios* (ὁμοούσιος = consubstantial; of the same substance) was used occasionally by gnostic authors and their opponents in the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Valentinus, Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian, Hippolytus) to express the broad notion that two or more things belong to the same class or category of being. It achieved widespread attention through its unexpected and controversial inclusion in the creedal formula drafted against Arius at the Council of Nicaea (325) which called the Son *homoousios* with the Father. The term's precise meaning in this text has been a matter of considerable scholarly debate. The older view, according to which it indicated monarchian tendencies among some synod members, is now largely discredited. It is more likely that it was introduced to reject Arius' subordination of the Son to the Father, although pragmatic and political considerations may have played a part as well (Stead: 242–66). After Nicaea, the term remained controversial for much of the 4th century; even pro-Nicene theologians, such as Athanasius and the Cappadocians, used it only sparingly.

One frequently advanced argument against the *homoousios* makes much of its unscriptural character (Athanasius, *Decr.* 21). From its earliest attestations, however, the term *homoousios* often occurred in the context of biblical exegesis. According to Clement of Alexandria, gnostics understood the phrase “likeness” in Gen 1:26 as referring to a psychic element that was *homoousios* with God and breathed into man at creation. Origen apparently read Heb 1:3 in combination with Wis 7:25 to yield the notion that there was “a common substance” of Father and Son inasmuch as an “effluent is *homoousios* with the body from which it is an emanation or a vapor” (Pamphilus, *Apologia pro Origene* 1.5).

To justify the use of *homoousios* in the Nicene Creed, Athanasius mainly cited biblical passages

proving the intimate union of Father and Son (Ps 45:1; 110:3; John 1:18; 6:46; 8:42; 10:30; 14:10). Gregory of Nyssa similarly used Phil 2:6 as a scriptural starting point to expound the term's meaning (*Antirrheticus* 20, GNO III/1.159; cf. Mateo-Seco: 401). Occasionally, however, the attempt was made to demonstrate the word's scriptural character by pointing to the use of cognates in the Bible. Thus, Athanasius cited Exod 3:14; Jer 23:18, 22; Heb 1:3; and Jer 9:10 to argue that the various Greek equivalents of “being” and “existence” employed in those verses all had the same meaning and thereby proved that “they of Nicaea breathe the spirit of Scripture” (*Ep. Afr.* 4). Marius Victorinus referred to the same passages (*De homoousio recipiendo* 2) and, in addition, to Matt 6:11, which he understood (along with John 6:58) as a petition for “life from the same substance” (*Adv. Arium* 2.3 [8]).

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Johannes Zachhuber

## Homosexuality

- I. Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament
- II. Greco-Roman Antiquity
- III. New Testament
- IV. Judaism
- V. Christianity
- VI. Islam
- VII. Literature
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### I. Ancient Near East and the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament

**1. The Concept of “Homosexuality” and Ancient Sources.** Eastern and biblical sources sometimes describe love and erotic-sexual interaction between people of the same sex. To bring all this under the rubric of “homosexuality” is an anachronism, however, because the concept of homosexuality implies an interpretation of gender different from that of the ancient sources.

The modern categories of homo-, bi-, and heterosexuality are based on the idea of “sexuality,” which is the product of the sexological research conducted since the last part of the 19th century CE. The underlying assumption of an individual sexual orientation is unknown to the ancient sources which do not categorize human gender and sexual behavior accordingly. Instead, they describe or presuppose same-sex interaction from a variety of perspectives, reflecting the gender politics of their own cultures. The issue is not same-sex interaction as such but (masculine) gender hierarchy and appropriate sexual roles within the patriarchal social

space. Some forms of same-sex erotic-sexual interaction are presented as queer and/or reprehensible, while others do not feature as a matter of moral judgment.

The only thing the sources discussed in this article have in common is same-sex sexual-erotic interaction. They do not yield any substantial information about the everyday life of "ancient gays and lesbians," neither do they form a sufficient basis for a "history of ancient Near Eastern homosexuality."

**2. Male-to-male Intercourse as an Act of Domination.** The majority of ancient sources present sexual-erotic interaction between people of same sex as an (often coerced) act of domination between the penetrating and the penetrated party.

**a. Hittite Sources.** The Hittite Laws (§§ 187–200) forbid various forms of incest, including a sexual relation with one's own son (and with animals). No other types of same-sex interaction are mentioned.

**b. Egyptian Sources.** The Egyptian *Book of the Dead* includes twice the statement: "I have not had sexual relations with a boy" (125 A 20, B 27). This indicates moral suspicion towards sexual interaction between men and boys; however, we do not know whether such encounters, or other kinds of same-sex relations, were considered illegal in Egypt.

The thirty-second maxim of the *Instruction of Ptahhotep*, a Middle Kingdom wisdom collection advising on justice and self-control, has been interpreted as warning against sexual relations with a "woman-boy." The text is very difficult to translate; according to an alternative interpretation (Kammerzell and Toro Rueda), it advises the dominant partner not to coerce the weaker partner, whether a woman or a boy.

The Egyptian *Myth of Horus and Seth* contains an episode (11.1–12.2) where the god Seth, the brother and murderer of Osiris, abuses Horus, the son of Osiris, by way of anal intercourse while Horus is asleep. Seth's purpose is to force Horus into the position of raped enemy and to deprive him of his status as the legal heir of the king of gods. Horus, however, manages to get Seth's sperm in his hand and, later on, mixes it with Seth's food, thus thwarting his aspirations. Seth's assault is motivated by greed for power and dominance, not by a homosexual desire.

**c. Mesopotamian Sources.** In the corpus of Mesopotamian legal texts, male-to-male sexual intercourse is recognized in the Middle Assyrian Laws:

If a man furtively spreads rumors about his comrade, saying: "Everyone has sex with him," or in a quarrel in public says to him: "Everyone has sex with you, I can prove the charges," but he is unable to prove the charges and does not prove the charges, they shall strike him fifty blows with rods; he shall perform the king's service one full month; they shall cut off (his hair?) and he shall pay one talent of lead. (MAL A § 19)

If a man has sex with his comrade and they prove the charges against him and find him guilty, they shall

have sex with him and they shall turn him into a eunuch. (MAL A § 20)

The first paragraph concerns a false accusation of habitual submitting to a sexual act with another male, while the other criminalizes the use of another citizen as a passive partner of a sexual act. In the second paragraph, the male-to-male sexual act (as any sexual act) reflects the socially sanctioned sexual asymmetry between the active and the passive partner, hence penetrating another citizen of one's own social standing means degrading the sexual status of a fellow citizen. The punishment for the assailant follows the talionic principle: because he has changed the sexual status of the victim, his own sexual status is changed by turning him into a eunuch and thus depriving him of his full masculinity.

Mesopotamian omens, unlike the laws, do not define what kind of behavior is acceptable; instead, they deal with individual, often unlikely cases. Sex omens can be found in the *Šumma ālu* collection, including four omens assuming a sexual contact between two males:

If a man has sexual relations with an assinnu, hardships will be unleashed from him. (CT 39 45:32)

If a man has sexual relations with a *geršeqqū*, for an entire year the deprivations which beset him will be kept away. (CT 39 45:33)

If a man has sexual relations with a male house(-born) slave, hardship will seize him. (CT 39 45:34)

If a man has sex per anum with his social peer, that man will become foremost among his brothers and colleagues. (CT 39 44:13)

Three of the four omens are auspicious: intercourse with another male represents dominance and gaining of power. A homosexual orientation is not presupposed by the omen apodosis; rather, they describe more or less likely cases where the behavior of a male citizen may approach or transgress the socially sanctioned boundaries of sexual behavior. As such, they reflect an interpretation of gender, social space, and sexual hierarchy, in which the sexual contact benefited the active and penetrative party, not the passive one.

**d. Hebrew Bible.** Leviticus 18 and 20:10–26, forming a part of the Holiness Code, define legal relations of sexual penetration, mirroring the patriarchal family structure. Like the Middle Assyrian Laws, they mark off the appropriate social space and regulate the liminal and precarious qualities of human sexual roles and behavior. Among the potential but forbidden sexual partners include another male person:

You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination. (Lev 18:20)

If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them. (Lev 20:13)

Lying with a male “as with a woman” – literally “the lyings of a woman” (*miškēbē ’iṣṣā*) – mirrors the expression “lying of a man” (*miškab zākār*), which implies the loss of virginity (cf. Num 31:17–18; Judg 21:11–12). Both expressions indicate an act of penetration. In male-to-male intercourse, the anal penetration causes a change in the passive partner’s status from the male to the female. Furthermore, the act is defined as *tō’ēbā* (“abomination”), the severest possible transgression of sacred borders, from which there is no purification and which, according to the ideology of the Holiness Code, is due to the habits of the “inhabitants of the land” that caused the land to become defiled (Lev 18:27). Because of the *tō’ēbā* ideology, and unlike the Middle Assyrian Laws, Lev 20:13 imposes a death penalty to both parties of the male-to-male intercourse.

The biblical story of the destruction of Sodom (Gen 19) tells of two angels of God coming to Sodom to find out whether its inhabitants had committed all the evil they were accused of (cf. Gen 13:13; 18:20–21). Lot, who is a newcomer in the city, invites them to stay over at his house. While they are dining, “the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man” gather at his house and demand that Lot bring his guests out, so that they may “know” (that is, to have a sexual intercourse with) them. Lot refuses to deliver his guests and offers his two daughters instead, but the men of Sodom say: “This fellow came here as an alien, and he would play the judge!” The men attempt to break into Lot’s house, but the angels stop them by making them blind; eventually, the episode leads to the total destruction of the city. The story does not present homosexual desire as the motivation of the attempted gang rape by the men of Sodom; instead, it is portrayed as an outrageous act of domination with the aim of disgracing Lot and his guests. Such a xenophobic aggression towards strangers expresses an ultimate disrespect to the sacred duty of hospitality, which, therefore is presented as the core of the Sodomites’ sin in early interpretations of the story (e.g., Ezek 16:49; Wis 19:14; Matt 10:11–15).

**3. Male Partnerships.** A few ANE images and texts depict close, even intimate relationships between two male persons.

**a. Images.** Explicit homoeroticism is difficult to find in the ANE and Egyptian art. The issue has been raised mainly with regard to two sets of pictures. One of the several Old Babylonian terracotta plaques depicts a standing couple having anal intercourse while the penetrated partner is drinking through a straw and has been interpreted as a homoerotic scene (Bottéro/Petschow). However, the male gender of the penetrated partner is ambiguous, and all other similar plaques depict a heterosexual intercourse (see Cooper 1972–75).

More to the point may be the Egyptian images from the 5th dynasty (ca. 2350 BCE) in the tomb of

Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep. The bas-reliefs of the tomb depict two men facing each other, embracing and holding hands, which suggests an intimate connection between them (see fig. 5). While some scholars have interpreted the two men as brothers or twins (e.g., Parkinson), others have argued that the depictions of their intimacy rather suggests that they were lovers (e.g., Dowson).

**b. Mesopotamian Sources.** The Standard Babylonian version of the Epic of Gilgamesh can be characterized – among other things – as a love story between two men: Gilgamesh the king of Uruk, and Enkidu, a primitive man created to be a suitable partner on whom Gilgamesh could spend his sexual energy. The relationship between the two men is described as most intimate, entailing homoerotic associations. Gilgamesh loves Enkidu “like a wife” and declines the goddess Ishtar’s proposal. When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh covers his body “like that of a bride” and laments for six days and seven nights. In the early phase of the narrative, there are plenty of sexually excited encounters, not only between the two men but also between Gilgamesh and the Urukian women, Enkidu and the prostitute Shamhat and, in a sense, also between Gilgamesh and Ishtar. Towards the end of the Epic, sex fades away, giving way to Gilgamesh’s development towards what could rather be called masculine asceticism. This, however, does not diminish the love between Gilgamesh and Enkidu, whose relationship is the *cantus firmus* of the Epic. They do not form a “homosexual” partnership in modern terms but, rather, a mutual bonding of two equal men based on love and with no division of sexual roles resembling those between men and women in the patriarchal society.

**c. Hebrew Bible.** The relationship of Gilgamesh and Enkidu has been compared, not only with that of Achilles and Patroclus in Homer’s *Iliad*, but also with the friendship of David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18–20; 2 Sam 1), likewise characterized by mutual love and affection. Soon after David son of Jesse had entered king Saul’s household, he became a close friend of Jonathan, Saul’s son, with whom he went through a series of tribulations before becoming Saul’s successor. It is said that “the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam 18:1; cf. 19:1; 20:17). This is expressed by mutual vows (20:42), exchange of clothing (18:4), and crying and kissing before parting (20:41). When Jonathan dies in the battle, David intones a lament over him and his father, saying: “your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women” (2 Sam 1:26).

Due to some unmistakably homoerotic traits of the story, the nature of David’s and Jonathan’s relationship has often been interpreted in terms of “homosexuality.” No acts of domination occur between them, but, as in the case of Gilgamesh and Enkidu,



the love between David and Jonathan “passes the love of women” precisely as a mutual love and companionship between equals – neither emulating nor replacing the heterosexual gender matrix but representing another case of profound male bonding.

**4. Cult Functionaries and Homoeroticism.** The issue of same-sex sexual activity is sometimes raised with regard of cultic personnel whose sexual status is disputed or queer.

**a. Mesopotamian Sources.** The devotees of Ištar called *assinnu*, *kurgarrû*, and *sinnišānu* are mentioned in several texts from different periods as representatives of an ambivalent gender. These people (sometimes also the “lamentation priests” *kalû* and *ku-lu’u*) participate in activities including cross-dressing, ritual dance, healing, prophecy, and lament. They had a permanent and institutionalized third-gender role deriving from the mythological explanation of their existence. As neither men nor women, they did not perform the dominant and active sexual role of a male citizen but, rather, emulated Ishtar’s power to transgress sexual boundaries. Among them may have been those who were born as hermaphrodites or who were castrated. There are some ambiguous hints of them involved in sexual acts with male persons; however, if such acts actually took place, they should not be interpreted as a case of same-sex interaction since the *assinnu* were not considered male on society’s gender spectrum.

**b. Hebrew Bible.** In the HB, the issue of homoeroticism is sometimes raised with regard to the *qādēš/qēdēšim*, whose sexual performance has traditionally been interpreted as male (homosexual) prostitution on the basis of Deut 23:18–19. They are also mentioned in the books of Kings where several kings are said to have done away with them (1 Kgs 14:24; 15:12; 22:47; 2 Kgs 23:7). The only reference to their sexual activity is Deut 23:18–19 – provided that they are to be understood as the recipients of “the fee of a prostitute and wages of a dog” (v. 19), but this is not self-evident. Other texts do not refer to any kind of sexual performance; however, 2 Kgs 23:7 connects the *qēdēšim* with the worship of the goddess Asherah. The class of *qēdēšim* is presented as an example of religious rather than sexual transgression, and it may be a literary/ideological rather than historical construct altogether (Bird).

**5. Female Homoeroticism.** The ANE sources, including the HB, say nothing about female-to-female sexual-erotic activity. Only one Mesopotamian omen mentions this option: “If one male dog mounts another, women will copulate” (TCS 4:24:33). The reason for the silence may be that sexual contacts between women did not threaten the sexual hierarchy of the patriarchal social space.

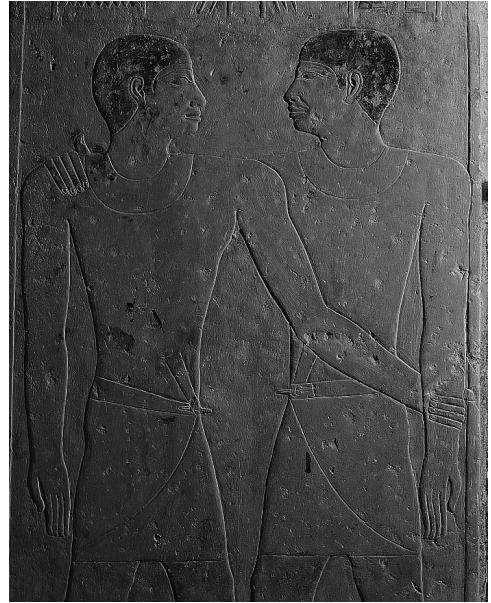


Fig. 5 Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum (ca. 2350 BCE)

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Martti Nissinen

## II. Greco-Roman Antiquity

Homosexuality, especially male, was widely practiced and often discussed in Greek and Roman culture. (Some modern authors prefer the term "bisexuality," since sources rarely refer to permanent same-sex orientation, but generally assume free choice.) The most common form was "boy love" (παιδικὸς ἔρως, παιδεραστία), a relation between an adult and an adolescent boy. Long lasting relations are exceptional. Active and passive roles were judged differently. The passive one would be taken as degrading, because a male adopts the position of a woman and becomes "effeminate." (This is currently explained on the basis of a theory of penetration and domination, developed e.g., by Dover, but challenged by Davidson). Legal restrictions mostly concerned prostitution and the use of force (ὑβρις). Harsh repression came under Christian emperors, culminating with Justinian. The driving force was not only Christian morality, but also a change of mentality on the pagan side (Cantarella: 187–91).

A peculiar custom (or even institution) in Greek archaic time was the noble aristocratic form of boy love; the customs of different cities were described by Plato (*Conv.* 182A–183D). The origin is often attributed to the Dorians, and perhaps the root lies in prehistoric initiatory ritual (Bethe). This boy love ideally had a social function: an adolescent found a friend and mentor outside of his family, who encouraged his development, introduced him to military and social standards of society, and supported his first steps into public life. On the other hand, the relation could take on the aspect of a passionate and romantic love affair. There were celebrated pairs of lovers, mythical (Achilles and Patroclus) and historical (Harmodius and Aristogiton). This noble eros was sharply distinguished from vulgar, esp. mercenary pederasty (Aeschines, *Or.* 1, analyzed by Dover).

In the later 5th century BC aristocratic boy love seems to have lost general acceptance (Görgemanns: 150–53). Euripides (*Chrysis*, lost play) made the Theban Laios the inventor of boy love, with tragic consequences. Several writers (Lysias, *Erotikos*; Xenophon, *Conv.* 8; Ps.-Demosthenes, *Or.* 61) defended it by stressing the educational over the erotic aspect. Socrates became a paradoxical example of educational eros refraining from sexual acts. Plato's famous theory of love was a philosophical sub-

limation of aristocratic boy love. Centuries later, Plutarch (*Amatorius*) tried to integrate the pedagogical-philosophical element into a picture of ideal marriage (Feichtinger). The memory of noble boy love was, however, never forgotten (Maximus Tyrius, *Or.* 18–21 on Socratic love).

The discussions about boy love could lead to outright condemnation of sexual relations. Plato pronounced it with increasing severity (*Resp.* 402D–403C; *Phaedr.* 250E; *Leg.* 636C and 841D). For him, this is a matter of controlling excessive desires (ἐπιθυμίας). In this context, the formula "against nature" (παρὰ φύσιν) makes its appearance (*Phaedr.*, *Leg.*). "Nature" primarily refers to the biological function of sexual organs; in *Leg.* 840D Plato also points out that animals do not have homosexual practices. (Modern ethologists disagree.) In Hellenistic time there is no direct evidence of a similarly strict position; early Stoics even advocated homosexual boy love (Zeno *fr.* 247–49 v. Arnim). But clearly there was an antagonism in general opinion: popular literary genres like New Comedy and Greek novel, glorifying marital love, had no sympathy for homosexual love (in contrast with lyric and epigram). Comparison of boy love and woman love became an oratorical subject. From the 1st century CE on explicit moral condemnations are found, often connected with the παρὰ φύσιν formula (Musonius Rufus *Frag.* 12 Hense; Philo, *Abr.* 135–37; *Spec.* 3.37–42; Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.273–75; Plutarch, *Amat.* 751DE; Ps.-Lucian, *Am.* 19–20; Dio Chrysostomus, *Ven.* 135). The term has now acquired greater weight. For Plato, "nature" was not a normative ethical principle, and his παρὰ φύσιν might be paraphrased with "irregular." (It could even be claimed that homosexual attraction is "natural": Euripides, *Frag.* 840 N.; Xenophon, *Hier.* 1.33.) In Stoicism, "nature" became a supreme normative concept ("living in accordance with nature," ὁμολογουμένως τῇ φύσει ζῆν) pointing to the divine ordering of the cosmos and its laws (νόμος). Thus, for the rigoristic Stoic Musonius, παρὰ φύσιν would imply "violating universal divine law."

Paul (Rom 1:26–27) may have adopted the term in this spirit, even without accepting the philosophical background. The different estimation of active and passive partners is no longer valid in this context. Therefore πόρνοι (male prostitutes) and ἀρσενοκοῖται (persons lying with males) can be mentioned on one level in 1 Cor 6:9 and 1 Tim 1:10. (The word ἀρσενοκοίτης apparently is a Jewish-Greek coinage referring to the phrase μετὰ ἄρσενος κοιμᾶσθαι in Lev (LXX) 18:22 and 20:13; Jewish context also in *Orac. Sibyll.* 2.73.)

About female homosexuality, sources are less abundant. In archaic time, there is Sappho of Lesbos and her love poems to girls. Possibly, there existed a female counterpart of aristocratic initiatory boy love. (Maximus Tyrius 18.9 compares Sappho

with Socrates.) On the other hand, there is vulgar hedonistic sexuality. Lucian (*Dial. meretr.* 5) gives a lively description of a lesbian scene among three women, one of whom acts a masculine role, and even has a substitute of a male genital. This kind of practice is perhaps alluded to by Paul when he speaks of women who “exchange the female use [χοῖνους referring to sexual acts since Plato and Xenophon] for the use contrary to nature” (Rom 1:26).

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Herwig Görgemanns

### III. New Testament

Homosexuality, along with heterosexuality, was invented in the 19th century. It is for this reason an anachronism to think early Christians employed this classification. To be sure, men had sex with men and women with women, but the ancients did not imagine that persons with same-gender sexual desire formed one category and those with desire for the other gender another. Unlike the modern notion that sexuality is a defining element of personality, ancient sexual desire was uniform and did not reveal identity. Desire was desire whether it was aimed at the same or the other gender.

Yet antiquity was not without sexual classification. Not surprisingly, it was oriented around the interests of elite males; sexual behavior was sorted out using a scheme of activity/passivity. To act on the entities of the external world is the praiseworthy, male, free, upper class, and rational way to exist; to be acted upon by external entities is the inferior, female, slavish, poor, and irrational way to exist. NT texts reputed to speak about homosexuality read much differently when approached with this ancient schema in mind.

Romans 1:18–27 is a case in point, since it has been interpreted as a denunciation of homosexuality: the anger of God (1:18) is provoked by human violation of the principle of complementarity by which God structured the cosmos, symbolized by

the union of Adam and Eve. On this reading, which is more indebted to the philosophical scheme of active/passive than to a careful reading of the opening chapters of Genesis, God turns homosexuals over to more homosexuality, and the inherent narcissism of having sex with someone of the same gender, it is argued, exemplifies original sin. Yet this interpretation unravels as soon as it is seen that idolatry, not sexual behavior, and certainly not homosexuality, provokes God’s anger. Romans 1:18–23 narrates injustice perpetrated by those who deprive God of honor and gratitude, thus bringing God into disrepute. Disrespect caused shame, and angry elite males desired that the ones who caused them shame experience shame as well. So God, having been treated unjustly by idolaters, reacts in anger by handing them over to *πάθος*, which, in ancient philosophy, was associated with lack of self-control, insatiability, and, consequently, shame. Whereas ancient moralists began with gluttony in their narratives of profligacy and concluded with same-gender sexual acts, in Rom 1:24–27 Paul, presumably for rhetorical effect, goes directly to sex.

Thus, in Rom 1:26, women go beyond “natural use” (KJV). This is philosophical terminology referring to the natural (i.e., the passionless) use of objects; it is not an allusion to the complementarity of male and female as the translations “natural intercourse” or “natural relation” imply. As some writers in the early church recognized, this verse is not about lesbians but about married women who have gone beyond the rule of passionless sex with their husbands, an ethic pioneered by Paul (cf. 1 Thess 4:3–5) and borrowed from moral philosophers.

“Natural use,” this time “of the female,” likewise plays a crucial role in Rom 1:27. It is one of several anti-erotic motifs Paul borrows from moral philosophy as he narrates God’s turning of idolaters over to *πάθος* and their consequent shame. Another is “they were enkindled,” an allusion to the popular motif of erotic desire as burning; the passive voice, it should be noted, suggests attack or invasion rather than expression of a fixed orientation. What comes next is a stock philosophic theme about insatiable desire: the inflamed appetite (*ὄρεξις*). Finally, the shame elite males felt having a passion is adduced by *ἀσχμησύνη*, a term which designated an indecent public appearance. A paraphrase of 1:27 brings these motifs together: “males left the natural use of the female and were enkindled in their appetite for one another, males producing indecorousness with males and in this way receiving the punishment in themselves which was necessary from their error.” As Dale B. Martin has pointed out, the issue here is not the wrong kind of desire but too much of it.

First Corinthians 6:9 contains two terms frequently cited as evidence for homosexuality, but



just as in Rom 1:18-27 the topic of justice, not sexual morality, runs through the passage (6:1, 7, 9, 11). This is why "male prostitute," while not anachronistic and an improvement over preceding translations, is nevertheless disturbing: these were usually young men living in poverty. Would Paul have thought it to be an act of injustice that a youth sell himself that he might live? A more likely explanation follows from the fact that *μαλακοί* ("soft ones") had an established meaning among moral philosophers who followed Aristotle (*Eth. nic.* 7.7.4-5) in associating softness with lack of self-control, luxury, and unjust acts.

With respect to the compound noun ἀρσενικοῦς ("one who beds males"), its occurrence here for the first time in extant ancient literature ought not to lead to the conclusion that Paul himself coined the term to condemn homosexuality. Words built on the same pattern (e.g., "one who beds his mother") go back to the 6th century BCE. They carried a note of violence, since the second half of the word denotes unwanted penetration. Similarly, in the centuries after Paul the word connoted outrage and arrogance referring to one male's violent shaming of another male, in other words, rape.

Homosexuality is not found in the NT. But once that is recognized, new and intriguing questions arise in place of the old hunt for confirmation of already held moral opinions.

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#### IV. Judaism

■ Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism ■ Rabbinic Judaism ■ Medieval Judaism ■ Modern Judaism

##### A. Second Temple and Hellenistic Judaism

Allusions to same-sex relations are rare in early Jewish writings of Palestinian provenance, even in the so-called Hellenistic crisis of the early 2nd century. The Damascus Document lists the prohibition of Lev 18:22 and 20:13 in summary form (4QD<sup>c</sup>/4Q270 2 ii.16b-17a / 6QD/6Q15 5 3-4; similarly 4QRP<sup>c</sup>/4Q367 3 3-4). On cross-dressing 4QOrd<sup>a</sup>/4Q159 2-4+8 7, expands the prohibition of Deut 22:5 to include wearing a women's tunic (cf. 4QD<sup>f</sup>/4Q271 3 3-4). 4Q172 alludes to Gomorrah in the context of sexual sin (frg. 4) but without further specification (similarly 4QAggCreat/4Q180 2-4 ii.5-9; Jub 13:13-18; cf. Gen 18:20-21). 4QCate-na<sup>a</sup>/4Q177 iv.2-4 (par. 4QBeat/4Q525 22) speaks of

their disgusting acts, spending the night together and wallowing.

Gentile contexts account for the theme elsewhere. *Sibylline Oracles* bk. 3 condemns Rome and the nations for promoting sex between males, male prostitution of boys, and pederasty (3.185-87, 596-99; similarly 4.33-34; 5.166-68, 387, 430). The *Letter of Aristaeus* sees the pride of cities in "procuring males" as perversion and a threat to the survival of the species (152; cf. also 108; 130). *Second Enoch* attacks sex between consenting adult males (34:1-2) and calls pederasty a "sin which is against nature, which is child corruption in the anus in the manner of Sodom" (MS P 10:2). Sodom's sin is depicted as inhospitality, sometimes without reference to sexual violence (Sir 16:8; Wis 10:6-8; 19:13-17; cf. also 4 Ezra 7:110-15), though this may be assumed and is sometimes explicit (L.A.B. 45:1-6; Theod. 7; T. Levi 6:8-11; cf. also Liv. Pro. 3:6-9; 2 Bar. 64:2). *Apoc. Ab.* 24:8 describes not anal sex but naked men standing forehead to forehead. Wisdom 14:26 links idolatry as perversion with sexual perversion. *Pseudo-Phocylides* deplores same-sex relations along with adultery (3), depicts such acts between both men and women as unnatural, not even present among animals (190-92; so Plato, *Leg.* 836C), and warns parents that boys with fancy hairstyles attract pedophiles (210-14). The *Testament of Solomon* argues that such behavior is demonic perversion (4:5). The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* which probably embody material from the period likens such perversion to the deeds of the Watchers and the men of Sodom (T. Naph. 2:2-3:5; cf. also T. Levi 14:6; T. Naph. 4:1; T. Benj. 9:1).

Philo of Alexandria targets both pederasty and sex between consenting males and between consenting females with a range of arguments to bolster the prohibitions in Lev 18:22 and 20:13 (see esp. *Spec.* 3.37-42; *Abr.* 133-41; and *Contempl.* 50-63). These include wasting seed, so threatening the survival of the species; feminization of men, a disease which reduces men to the shame of being like women, rendering them passive, with diminished virility, if not impotence, sometimes associated with self-mutilation (cf. Deut 23:1). He attacks effeminate dress and make-up, cross-dressing (*Virt.* 18), and deplores the status given hybrid men and women in processions. Beyond Lev 20:13, he declares that the Law demands immediate execution for such acts. Philo's account of sexual perversion at Sodom depicts men in a drunken state engaging in promiscuous sex with both women and men, a phenomenon he sees as typical behavior at parties where alcohol fuels excessive, uncontrolled passions. From Plato's *Symposium* he knows Aristophanes' myth devised to justify homosexuality among men and women as natural but rejects it outright (*Contempl.* 59-63; Plato, *Symp.* 189-93; cf. also Philo, *QG* 2.49; *Virt.* 20-21; *Her.* 274).



Josephus similarly supports the biblical prohibitions with arguments about perversion of nature, effeminacy, surrender to lawless pleasure, and neglect of the duty of procreation (*Ant.* 3.275; 4.290–91). He reports Antony's plan to have sex with both Mariamne and her brother (*Ant.* 15.25, 30), Herod's inappropriate fondness for his eunuchs (*Ant.* 16.230), whom his son Alexander seduced in an act of rebellion (*Ant.* 16.232; cf. also J.W.1.488–492), and the Zealots' alleged engagement in effeminacy, cross-dressing, and copying women's passions (J.W. 4.561–62; similarly of Gaius (*Ant.* 19.30). He deplores the vice in Sparta, Elis, and Thebes (*C. Ap.* 2.273–75) and even among the gods (*C. Ap.* 2.273, 275). The common assumption is that what is prohibited is perversion of natural creation and mostly something perpetuated by men who have lost control of their passions and engage in indiscriminate sex with both women and men.

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## B. Rabbinic Judaism

**1. Male Same-Sex Relations.** Following Lev 18:22 and 20:13, prohibiting “lying with a man as one would with a woman,” rabbinic Judaism of the mishnaic and talmudic periods (i.e., the first seven centuries CE) prohibited sexual intercourse between men. Interestingly, the rabbis interpreted the prohibition as limited exclusively to anal intercourse (*Sifra*, Qedoshim 10:11; *bSan* 54a–b). While they considered it among the most heinous of crimes, alongside murder, adultery, and idolatry (see e.g., *mSan* 8:7), they seem to have been utterly unconcerned with any other form of sexual or sensual interaction between men. While they reserved great opprobrium for men who engage in anal intercourse with other men, even considering earthquakes to be divine retribution for such activity (*yBer* 13c [9:2]), they express no concern about a man engaging in any other form of sexual or sensual interaction with another man nor do they prohibit such activity, and they make neutral reference to men kissing one another (e.g., *tNaz* 4:7), being naked with one another (e.g., *bAZ* 42b [3:1]), sharing the same bed (*bQid* 82a), and even touching one another's genitalia (*GenR* 59:8). These contacts are consistently depicted as platonic. The rabbis' lack of concern with such activity between same-sex partners is in stark contrast to their strict prohibition of such contact (even platonically) between opposite-sex partners. Until Maimonides in the 12th century CE (*MishT*, *Issurei b'rah* 21:1, 6), the rabbis did not extend a fence around the same-sex prohibition as they did for the opposite-sex prohibition leaving the former limited to anal intercourse. The

contrast between the rabbis' utter anathema for anal intercourse between men and their lack of concern with nearly all other same-sex physical interactions suggests that while their prohibition can and should be labeled as homophobic, we should be careful not to conflate modern forms of homophobia with this late antique version.

**2. Female Same-Sex Relations.** Female same-sex intercourse is nowhere prohibited in the HB. In the 2nd or 3rd centuries CE, Palestinian rabbis read a prohibition against same-sex marriage (including marriage between women) into Lev 18:3's command not to act according to the customs of the Egyptians or Canaanites (*Sifra*, Ahare Mot 9.8). Whether the prohibition includes same-sex intercourse in addition to marriage is unclear. Based on the *Sifra*'s rules of exegesis, it would be difficult to justify such a reading of Lev 18:3, and no other verse is connected to female same-sex intercourse by the *Sifra*. What is clear is that this passage in the *Sifra* was either unknown to or rejected by the Babylonian rabbinic community, which considered sexual intercourse to imply penile penetration of a vagina or anus (see e.g., *bSan* 54a–55a; thus also for bestiality, *bAZ* 22b). The rabbis of Babylonia, therefore, deemed female same-sex interactions not to be sex and not to fall under any explicit prohibition. Instead, the Babylonian Talmud labeled it “merely lewd behavior,” that is, discouraged but not prohibited (*bYev* 76a). Due to the emergence in the Geonic period (7th–11th cent.) of the Babylonian Talmud as the authoritative rabbinic text, female same-sex intercourse continued to be considered not prohibited, until the 12th century when Maimonides connected the talmudic passage to the *Sifra*, and conflated the two texts into one (*MishT* *Issurei b'rah* 21:8). Placed together in Maimonides' code, the *Sifra* was suddenly read as addressing not only female same-sex marriage but also sexual intercourse, and the Babylonian Talmud's statement that it is (merely) lewd behavior is replaced by Maimonides' “clarification” that it is forbidden (though even he felt compelled to acknowledge that it lacks a specific biblical prohibition). Maimonides even warned men not to permit their wives to associate with women “known” to engage in such activities, marking the first recorded reference to Jewish lesbians in a Jewish text.

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### C. Medieval Judaism

Although medieval Judaism inherited the unambiguous biblical and rabbinic prohibitions against sodomy, the attitudes among Jews toward male sexual relations were by no means clear cut or consistent in the Muslim world at least, which extended from Iran in the east to Spain in the west, where the overwhelming majority of Jews lived. This was the result of two factors: (1) the deep acculturation of Jews to medieval Islamic society which was both more similar religiously to Jewish society and more tolerant towards it than medieval Christianity and (2) because Islam had a similar attitude toward the phenomenon together with a high degree of inconsistency vis-à-vis homoeroticism in literature and male homosexuality in practice. The Qurʾān 7:81; 26:165, and 27:55 decries "lusting after males," although it never describes the act itself. There is also a certain ambiguity in the Qurʾān in passages which promise the believers that they will be attended by young male servants in Paradise (52:24; 56:17; 76:19) as well as by the Houris (beautiful virgins). The Hadith, on the other hand, is quite explicit that both the active and the passive partner should be put to death. (These traditions are collected in al-Nuwayrī: 2:204–10.) However, the near total absence of women from the public sphere in medieval Islamic society and their absence from male social gatherings – except for singing girls among the elite – made amorous relations between men more acceptable. So too the idealization of the beardless boy as the paragon of beauty celebrated by poets and contemplated by the mystics when considering the Divine (Arab. *al-nazar ilā 'l-murd*) created an atmosphere in which pederasty could flourish. As the noted Genizah scholar, S. D. Goitein, observed: "The social notions of the majority population had its effect" (312).

Rabbinical authorities in the Middle Ages accepted the sages' permission – contra R. Judah ha-Nasi – for bachelors to sleep under the same cover (*mKid* 4:14). Maimonides observes: "Israel is not suspected of intercourse with male or beast" (*MishT*, *Issurei bi'ah* 22:2), but he goes on to state that if an

Israelite is kept from being alone with a male or a beast, that is praiseworthy (*ibid.*). Since pilgrimages were a venue for the close contact between members of both sexes, young and old, without the usual restrictions of the private home, avoidance of the appearance of impropriety was considered necessary. A statute in Judeo-Arabic probably from the early 11th century has a clause: "Boys, or a grown-up man together with a boy, should not..., in order not to expose themselves to suspicion and make for themselves a bad name" (Cambridge University Library, Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection 20.117v, trans. in Goitein: 21).

While there is relatively little information on male homosexuality among Jews in the medieval Muslim East, there is considerably more with regard to Jews in al-Andalus (Islamic Iberia). Much of this is literary, and homoerotic themes abound in the Hebrew poetry of Spain which was written in accordance with the metric and rhyming patterns of Arabic secular poetry and, no less importantly, many of that literature's themes which include professions of love for the handsome youth who is often called a gazelle or a fawn (Heb. *'ofer* or *tsevi*). There has been an ongoing debate among scholars as to whether or not this poetry represents a social reality or was merely a trope borrowed from Arabic convention. Jefim Schirmann, who first brought the importance of the subject to scholarly attention argued that it had to have had a foundation in social reality; whereas, Nehemia Allony in a counterpoint article maintained the contrary, as did other scholars such as Dan Pagis. That the subject could be open to debate is due to the fact that much of this amorous poetry contains few explicitly sexual details. The male identity of the beloved is inferred from the masculine nouns and verbs and comparisons to biblical heroes. The only physical detail mentioned is the youth's cheek (see Scheindlin: 88). Scheindlin observes that much of this love poetry is "sensual without being sexual" and that its high literary character "virtually precludes the possibility of our learning from it about Jewish Bohemian life (*ibid.*: 88–89). And in religious poetry where the same erotic trope of the gazelle or the fawn is used variously for God or the Messiah, clearly there is some ambiguity. This is perhaps somewhat of an understatement since there are also explicit references to the beloved's hair, eyes, and lips in this poetry. In one strophic poem (Heb. *shir'ezor*; Arab. *muwashshah*), the poet, Joseph ibn Tsaddiq of Cordoba (ca. 1075–1149) writes "When I thirst, I find coolness in your saliva" (trans. in Roth: 32).

There is no ambiguity, however, in the picaresque Hebrew literature, the so-called *mahberet*, from al-Andalus which is consciously modelled after the Arabic *tour de force*, the rhymed prose narrative known as the *maqāma*. Judah Alḥarizi's (ca. 1165–ca. 1235) *Taḥkemoni*, a Jew whom the poet

met in Baghdad recites a verse in praise of his male lover (Alḥarizi: 430):

If Amram's son [Moses] could have seen my beloved's face blush when drunk  
And the beauty of his curls and the splendor of his hands

He would not have written in his Torah: "And with a man" [thou shalt not lie as with a woman; Lev 18:22]

On lesbianism among Jews, there is very little information at all. The HB does not specifically include sexual relations between females as an abomination. However, the sages interpreted the prohibition in Lev 18:3 not to copy the practices of the land of Egypt which then goes on to include a long list of sexual taboos, to refer also to sex between two women. Goitein notes that he had not found a single reference to the phenomenon in the thousands of Geniza documents studied by him. However, the subject of sexual relations between females does come up in halakhic literature. In a detailed responsum, R. Nissim b. Jacob Ibn Shāhīn of Kairouan discusses lesbians (Heb. *mesolelot*). The question was whether a lesbian was to be considered a harlot and therefore ineligible to marry a *kohen*, a member of the priestly caste (Abramson: 273). Maimonides rules that not only is there no punishment since there is neither a clear prohibition in the Torah, nor is there an act of intercourse (Heb. *bī'ah*) involved, but there is no harlotry, and hence the woman is not forbidden to a priest (contra Rav Huna in *bYev* 76a) or forbidden to her husband if already married. However, he goes on to say that she ought to be flogged for rebelliousness, and that the husband should watch over his wife against this and forbid known lesbians from coming into his home and his wife from visiting them (*MishT*, *Issurei bī'ah* 21:8).

Although there are fewer sources on homosexuality among Jews in medieval Christendom than in the Islamic world, there is ample evidence of its continuity in the kingdoms of Reconquista Spain. Todros ben Judah Abulafia (1247–ca. 1299), who served in the court of the Castilian monarchs Alfonso X and Sancho IV, in one poem refers to the advantages of young men over women (*Gan ha-meshalim*, no. 584). The archives of the Crown of Aragon also contain a number of records of Jews convicted of sodomy (cited in Assis: 50). There is even a record of one Jew who was burned at the stake in 1374 for his homosexual relations, but this seems to have been exceptional since the archives mention others who were pardoned after paying an indemnity (*ibid.*).

Other than exegetical commentary on traditional texts, there is relative silence on the subject of homosexuality in medieval Ashkenazi writing.

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## D. Modern Judaism

In the Jewish community, as in so much of the world, attitudes toward homosexuality have shifted radically in the past decade. The shift has been particularly apparent among American Jews. This article will focus mainly on American Jews, who have often been trendsetters relative to Jewish communities elsewhere. Orthodox Jews, who comprise about a tenth of the American Jewish population, disapprove of homosexuality, but they are now the only Jewish group which does, and even Orthodox attitudes have changed measurably in recent years. Outside of Orthodox Judaism, the question of homosexuality in modern Judaism has moved from older dichotomies such as permitted/forbidden and approve/disapprove into new questions of the place of LGBT lives and identities within Jewish religion and culture.

**1. Political Status.** On political issues of LGBT equality, American Jews are significantly more pro-LGBT than other American religious groups. An overwhelming majority (83%) of American Jews support legalizing same-sex marriage – a number higher than white mainline Protestants (62%), white Catholics (58%), and Hispanic Catholics (56%), and even religiously unaffiliated Americans (73%) (PRRI). Further, a majority of Jewish Americans (64%) understand sexual orientation to be an innate trait, again higher than any other religious group, and 79% believe that religious groups are alienating young people by being too anti-gay. Eighty percent support adoption by same-sex couples, and 88% support protecting LGBT people from employment discrimination.

Interestingly, the same survey indicated that only 25% of Americans believe Judaism to be "friendly toward LGBT people," with 34% believing it to be unfriendly, and 41% answering "don't

know” or declining to answer. This suggests a gap either between Jewish social attitudes and the official position of “Judaism” – most likely based on the notion that biblical verses prohibit homosexuality.

Of the major Jewish movements, the Reform Movement has taken a leadership role on public LGBT issues, via its Religious Action Center, which has supported marriage equality and discrimination protections for LGBT people. As far back as 1977, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the Reform rabbinic association, called for legislation decriminalizing homosexual acts.

Attitudes among Orthodox Jews are very different, as is true of their political attitudes in general. While “Jews are among the most strongly liberal, Democratic groups in U.S. Politics,” (Pew) half of Orthodox Jews describe themselves as politically conservative, and as of 2013, 57% identified with the Republican Party. A large fraction of the 17% of American Jews who do not support same-sex marriage and other LGBT equality issues are Orthodox Jews.

**2. Religious Status: Non-Orthodox.** A similar divide exists in religious principles regarding homosexuality. Despite ideological differences, all non-Orthodox Jewish denominations now ordain gays and lesbians as clergy, deem same-sex intimacy to be acceptable within Jewish law, and perform same-sex weddings. No Orthodox Jewish community holds any of these views.

Of the non-Orthodox denominations, the Conservative movement had the most protracted debate over these issues, with its Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) issuing six opinions in December 2006, with three opinions garnering enough votes to become official Conservative halakhah. (By contrast, the Reform movement encouraged LGBT inclusion in 1987, began ordaining gays and lesbians in 1990, and approved same-sex weddings in 2000.) The three “official” opinions gave varying interpretations of the biblical prohibition on male anal sex (Lev 18:22; 20:13). The opinion by Rabbis Elliott Dorff, Daniel Nevins, and Avram Reisner maintained the literal text of the biblical ban, but limited it to anal sex only, stating that subsequent rabbinic extensions of the law could be changed in the name of human dignity (Dorff et al.). The opinion by Rabbi Joel Roth restated his earlier view that Leviticus and rabbinic interpretations place a total ban on homosexual activity among men or women. And an unusual opinion by Rabbi Leonard Levy urged social acceptance of LGBT people, while at the same time promoting so-called “reparative therapy,” which has since been thoroughly discredited by every mental health association and formally banned in California, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia. Two more permissive opinions – one which would declare the

Levitical verses unintelligible and another which would limit their applicability only to times in which same-sex couples could not marry – were not adopted.

In practice, few of these biblical details remain salient today. As with the Conservative movement’s earlier decision to ordain women as rabbis, the halakhic details of the Dorff/Nevins/Reisner opinion have been basically set aside. Just as few Conservative women rabbis today take on the formal *hiyyuv* (the voluntary obligation to perform *mitsvot* from which women have been traditionally exempt) that is supposedly required by Conservative halakhah, so too few Conservative rabbis remind gay male couples that some of their possible sexual acts may be forbidden by biblical prohibition. Rather, the 2006 decisions were widely seen as permitting gay people simply to live their lives, as the Reform and Reconstructionist movements had done for decades. Thus the biblical interpretations offered by the rabbis of the movement have not filtered down into popular consciousness, which still appears to regard the biblical prohibition as clear.

Non-Orthodox denominations have moved on to other religious questions, such as the appropriate form for same-sex wedding rituals and liturgy. In this matter, the experience of the Liberal movement in the United Kingdom is perhaps instructive. In 2005, that movement created several innovative ritual forms to sanctify same-sex weddings. Yet same-sex couples strongly preferred the traditional ritual and liturgy, with only slight modifications to account for same-gender spouses. In 2012, the Conservative movement released two official liturgies, one traditional and the other non-traditional in form. Importantly, neither liturgy included the formal *qiddushin* (betrothal) language, in which the groom “acquires” the bride, and to which many feminists had long objected (Zelovoff). In what might be termed an instance of the “law of unintended consequences,” heterosexual couples began adopting the same-sex liturgy, finding it more egalitarian.

Meanwhile, LGBT people are moving into Jewish leadership roles. In 2007, Rabbi Toba Spitzer became the first out lesbian to head a national rabbinic organization, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, and in 2013, Rabbi Jason Klein became the first out gay man to do so.

**3. Religious Status: Orthodox.** No stream of Orthodox Judaism – Modern Orthodoxy, Ultra-Orthodox Jewry, or even “Open Orthodoxy” – has made the religious changes that the other Jewish denominations have. However, there now exist a range of opinions within the Orthodox world regarding homosexuality, and some changes have taken place. In July 2010, a “Statement of Principles on the Place of Jews with a Homosexual Orientation in Our Community” was published, and eventually signed



by over 100 Orthodox rabbis (Statement of Principles). The "Statement of Principles" did not reject the understanding that Lev 18 and 20 placed a ban on homosexual acts of all kinds, but stated that "embarrassing, harassing or demeaning someone with a homosexual orientation or same-sex attraction is a violation of Torah prohibitions."

A response to the "Statement of Principles" was subsequently released in 2011 and signed by 223 Orthodox rabbis and "community leaders," who affirmed not only the biblical prohibition but the continued stigmatization of gay individuals and the value of reparative therapy (Torah Declaration). It was later discovered that the document was created by people associated with JONAH, Jews Offering New Alternatives to Homosexuality, the leading Orthodox reparative therapy organization. Reparative therapy continues to be a focal point of Orthodox debate. In 2012, JONAH was sued for fraud, a lawsuit still ongoing at the time of this writing. That year, the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) withdrew its support of JONAH, as did Rabbi Norman Lamm, who was the author of the 1974 *Encyclopaedia Judaica* article "Judaism and the Modern Attitude to Homosexuality."

Orthodox Rabbi Steven Greenberg's landmark volume, *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (2004), winner of the National Jewish Book Award in 2005, is the leading Jewish attempt to understand the biblical, talmudic, and rabbinic passages regarding homosexuality. His work has been challenged by more conservative writers, including Rabbi Chaim Rapoport's *Judaism and Homosexuality: An Authentic Orthodox View* (2004), which utilizes the category of *tinok she-nishbah* (a "captured infant," that is, someone who is not culpable, on account of his or her upbringing) to describe gay people.

**4. Cultural Prominence.** Within the wider American cultural context, the increased prominence and openness of gay and lesbian Jews is surely more noticeable than debates over biblical interpretation and Jewish liturgy. Examples from the 20th and 21st centuries include political figures Edie Windsor, plaintiff in the landmark Supreme Court case invalidating the Defense of Marriage Act, Barney Frank, and Harvey Milk; playwrights Tony Kushner, Stephen Sondheim, Harvey Fierstein; musicians Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, and Adam Lambert (not to mention the increased attention to the homosexuality of the Jewish writers of the "American Songbook"); producers David Geffen and Brad Falchuk (son of recent Hadassah president Nancy Falchuk); writers Allen Ginsberg, Maurice Sendak, Gertrude Stein, and Susan Sontag; and others. The prominent role of gay Jewish men in the entertainment industry has drawn attention and, occasionally, homophobic criticism as well.

Finally, LGBT Jewish literary production has been prolific. Biblically oriented books include *To-*

*rah Queeries*, a collection of sixty LGBT commentaries on the weekly Torah readings; Andrew Ramer's *Queering the Text* (2010); and Jay Michaelson's *God vs. Gay? The Religious Case for Equality* (2011). Important anthologies include *Queer Jews* (2002), *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* (2003), *Found Tribe* (2002) and *Twice Blessed: On Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish* (1989). Prominent works of American Jewish gay male fiction include David Feinberg's *Eighty-Sixed* (1989), Michael Lowenthal's *The Same Embrace* (1999), Aaron Hamburger's *Faith for Beginners* (2006), and Lev Raphael's *Dancing on Tisha B'Av* (1991). Jews also authored some of the seminal texts of queer theory and sociology, including Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (2006), Leslie Feinberg's *Stone Butch Blues* (2004), and Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men* (2001).

**5. Jewish Organizations.** Jewish communities in the United States and Israel have seen a significant increase in LGBT organizations and participation. In the United States, the organization Keshet works toward the full inclusion of LGBT people in Jewish life. Nehirim runs retreats and other community programs nationwide. Eshel runs conferences and provides counseling services for LGBT Orthodox Jews. Many Jewish federations now have LGBT committees for fundraising or provision of services. Israeli organizations include the Aguda, the Jerusalem Open House, Hod, Chevruta, Hoshen, and Bat Kol.

One flashpoint in Jewish-LGBT organizations has been the question of "pinkwashing," in which Israel uses its pro-LGBT political record for public relations purposes. High-profile American Jews such as Sarah Schulman and Judith Butler have condemned such practices as propagandistic exploitation, while the gay Jewish former porn star Michael Lucas has defended them as legitimate pride in Israel's pro-gay record.

It does not appear that these organizations are deeply concerned with biblical exegesis; non-Orthodox positions seem to simply ignore the biblical texts, while Orthodox ones affirm their traditional interpretation. As the Jewish LGBT community grows beyond existential questions concerning its validity, perhaps it will be able to engage with biblical and other textual traditions with less hesitation and greater nuance.

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## V. Christianity

- Patristics and Orthodox Churches ■ Medieval Times and Reformation Era ■ Modern Europe and America
- New Christian Movements

### A. Patristics and Orthodox Churches

While it remains a point of contention whether they could conceive of "homosexuality" as an erotic orientation to members of the same gender, Christians of the patristic period accepted several passages in the canonical Scriptures as condemnations of same-sex genital acts, most importantly the story of Sodom (Gen 19) and Paul's account of gentile error in Rom 1:18–32. Such scriptural references contributed to the formation of Christian sexual ethics. For example, in *Paed.* 2.10, Clement of Alexandria cites Gen 19:5; Lev 18:22; Rom 1:26–28, and the *Epistle of Barnabas* in condemning all non-reproductive sex acts, including those between males. But same-sex acts could be singled out for special condemnation. Ambrose comes close to articulating a notion of same-sex orientation, arguing that the angels who came to Sodom took the form of men because all the male inhabitants of the city preferred the appearance of men (*Abr.* 1.49). Thus, for Ambrose, the inhospitality of the Sodomites is a direct outcome of unbridled same-sex attraction.

In Romans, Paul used the relative acceptance of same-sex activity in Hellenistic society as evidence for the dishonor that proceeded from idolatry. This became a trope for later polemicists who wished to

contrast the sexual restraint of Christians with the purported laxity of "pagans." While the use of Scripture in anti-pagan polemic was necessarily limited, in *Cels.* 7.49, Origen echoes Rom 1:27b ("men committed shameless acts with men") while contrasting the moral superiority of simple Christians to pagan philosophers. The idea that same-sex acts are a blatant rejection of God could also be linked to anti-Jewish polemic. In his *Comm. Isa.*, Jerome explains Isa 3:9b ("they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it") in terms of the demand made by the Sodomites at Lot's door: *educ foras uiros, ut concumbamus cum eis* (Gen 19:5b). The wording here is more explicit than that of the MT or even the Vg. Jerome likens these words to the cries reported in the gospel, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" (Luke 23:21), effectively equating explicitly articulated same-sex desire with cheering on the death of Jesus. The comment is paralleled in pseudo-Basil's *Enarratio in Isaiam*.

While Bernadette Brootten finds patristic writers who denounce same-sex acts between women, few of them rely on Scripture for support. The most notable exceptions are Chrysostom's comments on Rom 1:26b in his *Hom. Rom.* 4, and Ambrosiaster's remarks on the same verse in the  $\alpha$ -recension of his *Commentarius in Epistolas Paulinas*. In the  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ -recensions of this work, he argues that the passage refers to "irregular" heterosexual activity.

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### B. Medieval Times and Reformation Era

The millennium encompassing the rise of Islam at one end, and the emergence of Protestant Christianity at the other, although a huge span, is marked in European Christianity chiefly by a consolidation and narrowing of focus on the nature of *Sodomitic* sin. The term carried over from rare and scattered patristic references to unspecified sins committed by the biblical residents of Sodom and Gomorrah, before God rained comprehensive fiery destruction down on the residents of both communities in Gen 19.

One of the earliest medieval references on record (*Visio Wettini*, ca. 827), Walahfrid Strabo's recounting of the deathbed visionary dream of his mentor, Wettil of Reichenau, contains a mere mention of "Sodomitic desire" (*Sodomito libido*), classified there as activity which will land its practitioners in his Cook's tour of Hell (anticipating Dante by almost 500 years), but was just as vague as Genesis on the precise nature of the sin at issue. A few years later, Hincmar of Reims, a fellow Carolingian, was more explicit about the nature of "Sodomitic sin" (*peccatum sodomitatum*). But his account, laid out in

his 860 treatise on the divorce of King Lothaire of Lorraine, encompassed various non-procreative sex acts with partners of either sex, together with some procreative ones undertaken with illicit partners (Boswell: 203–4).

Hincmar's approach emulated one of three competing patristic lines about the nature of Sodomitic sin: sexual activity undertaken primarily, or exclusively, for the purpose of satisfying libidinous desire rather than procreation. This view is evident, e.g., in Gregory the Great's references to Sodom's "crimes of the flesh" in his *Moralia of Job* (Jordan: 35–6). Another, perhaps more persuasive (but less popular) gloss on the text of Gen 19, appears in Origen, and again in Ambrose: inhospitality or violence toward guests (Boswell: 98). Ambrose also advocated yet a third account, a more general brand of arrogantly excessive licentiousness as the explanation for Sodom's destruction. So did many other patristic figures. Thus, John Cassian suggested gluttony as the fundamental sin (Boswell: 98), and Jerome suggested unapologetic pride in self-indulgent luxury, bloatedness (*saturia*), language which Gregory also echoes in his broader references to the prevalence of *luxuria* in Sodom (Jordan: 32–40).

Among patristic figures, only Augustine suggested, once, that Sodom warranted "a torrent of fire" because "it was a place where sexual intercourse between males had become so commonplace that it received the license usually extended by law to other practices" (*Civ.* 16.30). But even Augustine was more concerned with the damaging effects of inordinate (or disordered) desire more broadly speaking, as laid out in his account of the significance of the fall in *Civ.* 14.10–26. The prevalence of male-male sexual intercourse in Sodom would have been, even for Augustine, merely symptomatic of libidinous passions allowed to run riot.

The narrowing of focus which eventually recast the sins of the Sodomites as not just specifically sexual, but more specifically homosexual, can probably be traced to three historical factors: (1) the cult of Pelagius, the early 10th-century boy saint, as perpetuated in Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim's mid-10th century account of his martyrdom at the hands of the Caliph of Cordoba (Jordan: 10–28); (2) Peter Damian's polemic, written a century later (ca. 1050), against mutual sexual gratification among monks, and more generally against clerical predation of adolescent boys (*Book of Gomorrah*; Jordan: 45–66); and (3) the gradual association of homosexual acts with the destruction of entire cities, owing to the perceived parallel with Sodom (Puff: 17–30; esp. 26–27).

Hrotsvitha emphasized Pelagius' adolescent beauty, and the Caliph of Cordoba's carnal desire, which she characterizes expressly as Sodomitic vice. By also emphasizing Cordoba's reputation for sybaritic luxury, she unified for her readers the two

main threads of patristic interpretation of the sin of Sodom: sensory self-indulgence broadly understood, and sexual licentiousness in particular, conjoined now with an image of predatory pederasty as Sodomitic vice's exemplar. Finally, by emphasizing Cordoba's Islamic cultural otherness, she attributes an alien nature to Sodomites.

Peter Damian's work, which can perhaps be credited with the first coinage of the nominative form of the sin (sodomy; *sodomia*), could be construed as a more systematic theological elaboration of Hrotsvitha's focus on misdirected erotic desire. He emphasized, however, the "unnaturalness" of male-male erotic intimacy in its own right, independently of its procreative failings. He thus advocated a novel ordinal ranking among sexual sins, ranking all same-sex erotic liaisons as more spiritually degrading than opposite-sex fornication, or even bestiality. But his brief for prosecuting such acts did not secure adherents among his contemporaries, in part due to the zealotry of his own language. It came to fruition in later centuries however, as people came to be more accustomed to the idea of ranking sexual sins (see Thomas of Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II.II.q.154.a12), and as the church began to feel serious social pressure to institute clerical reforms, an issue which became further magnified by the rise of Protestantism.

The final element, the scriptural linkage between prevalence of "Sodomitic" acts and the fate of entire cities, came into its own first in systematic prosecution of same-sex acts in Florence and Venice during the 15th century – in Florence as a response to the city's pre-existing reputation for licentiousness, and fear of the long-term spiritual and material consequences of the underlying reality which bore out the reputation. In Venice, the impetus may have been more closely associated with Venice's vulnerability to floods and epidemics.

In both Florence and Venice the standard of punishment (mostly fines) was much milder than the public burnings that began to mount in Germanic cities north of the Alps in the 16th century. The Protestant Reformation added a new layer of urgency to these urban contagion models of sodomy: the Catholic church was regarded as corrupt in part because of the connection Peter Damian had drawn centuries earlier between clerical sexual practices and the condemnation of Sodom, now understood as a metaphor for the Roman church itself. The Protestant burghers of German cities newly independent of Rome's influence thus had to concern themselves with the prospect of religious as well as moral contagion in their midst, which made their efforts to stamp out sodomy all the more fevered.

Through the centuries covered by medieval Europe and the Reformation, there was a trend line binding same-sex erotic acts to a dominant interpretation of the significance of Gen 19. That inter-

pretation is nonetheless contentious. Compare, e.g., the non-response in medieval Christianity to the "sin of the Benjamites" at Gibeon in Judg 19 (Jordan: 30–31; Boswell: 93–97). More importantly, the trend was not monolithic. There were always countervailing social elements – homoerotic Italian Renaissance art, e.g., or Dante's treatment of Sodomites in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*.

Dante is puzzling in two respects. First, following Thomas Aquinas' classification of sexual sins, crafted less than half a century earlier, Dante lodges Sodomites pretty far down in hell, on a burning plain with blasphemers (violent against God) and usurers (violent against industry; see Gen 3:19). The Sodomites, wandering through an endless fiery rain (intentionally evoking the fate of Sodom), are in hell for the sin of violence against themselves, against their own nature. Yet in *Purgatorio* we find Sodomites on the same level as the most commonplace of sinners, the heterosexually lustful, at the top penitential level of Mount Purgatory. The shift is as dramatic as the temporal and conceptual distance between Aquinas and Hincmar. Moreover, while Dante's pilgrim is scornful of many of the denizens of hell as unworthy of respect, he is quite sympathetic to the Sodomites he meets on the burning plain. (See Pequigney for an attempt to reconcile these disparities.)

Dante's disparate treatment of same-sex eroticism in the two works is a useful reminder that there were complicating nuances even during an era that was becoming increasingly hostile to acts motivated by same-sex desire.

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### C. Modern Europe and America

While same-sex erotic acts have always existed, it is now generally accepted that the grouping of specific sexual practices, structures of desire, gendered behaviors, and psychosocial identifications associated with the term "homosexuality" is a modern European innovation. Famously, the term first appeared published in Leipzig, Germany in 1869 – but with minimal elaboration. Psychiatrists and physicians such as Karl Westphal and Sigmund

Freud fleshed out the concept in the decades that followed; thus "homosexuality" emerged as a historically and culturally specific formation, "the unstable conjunction of ... a psychological condition, an erotic desire, and a sexual practice" (Halperin: 131; cf. Foucault).

Exegetical connections between this cultural formation and Scripture were variable and not always obvious. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah continued to underwrite (loosely) the legal designation of "sodomy." Thus "sodomy" was the operative category in the infamous 1895 trials of Oscar Wilde; and Marcel Proust explicitly linked the term *l'homosexualité* to allusions to the Sodom story in the opening to *Sodom and Gomorrah* (1921). But it should be noted that "sodomy" was a term inherited from medieval usage that was itself not fully coherent nor always restricted to same-sex eroticism (Jordan 1997). Similarly, in 19th century Europe, it was still possible (if not necessarily common) to interpret the "unnatural" relations of women in Rom 1:26 as a reference to anal or oral sex between a woman and a man (Brooten: 189).

In the 20th century, a group of specific biblical passages came to occupy pride of place in European and American debates regarding homosexuality, both ecclesial and scholarly. These included, most commonly, Gen 19:1–29; Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:18–32; 1 Cor 6:9, and 1 Tim 1:10. Also relevant was Gen 1–3, read as a divinely-ordained template for gender complementarity. In 1980, the publication of John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* marked a major intervention, calling for a rethinking of the relevant scriptural texts – even if many of Boswell's specific arguments have since been called into question. Subsequent revisionist readings of Scripture have increasingly focused on murky questions of translation and on the historical specificity of the cultural logics (often deeply androcentric) that undergird the biblical texts (Martin).

In light of these shifts, changes in exegetical sensibilities can be observed, even among traditionalist Christians who maintain the Bible's unambiguous condemnation of homosexuality – e.g., the receding of the Sodom story as a central proof-text (Jordan 2011: 195). Traditionalist exegetical arguments continue to be made (Hays: 379–403; Gagnon). At the same time, some Christians in conservative denominations (such as evangelical Protestantism) have begun to build on mainstream biblical scholarship to develop constructive theological arguments for the affirmation of certain same-sex relationships in ways that would have been inconceivable only a few decades ago (e.g., Brownson; Vines).

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## D. New Christian Movements

Theological disputes around homosexuality currently preoccupying Christian churches are arguably founded less on what the Bible actually states and more commonly reflect ideologically-based hermeneutical approaches, whether premised on literal interpretations or liberal biblical criticism (cf. Barton). Traditional theological viewpoints are endorsed by major fundamentalist, evangelical, and Pentecostal denominations and the Catholic Church, based on key passages in the Bible which are regarded as irrevocable in condemning homosexuality, although there is an increasing tendency to separate the “sin” (homosexual acts) from the “sinner” (those with homosexual inclinations). Nonetheless, the subject has enthused fundamentalist churches calling upon biblical interpretations to condemn homosexuals, a view exemplified by the Westboro Baptist Church which claims “God hates fags” and that AIDS is a divine retribution for sexual sin.

By stark contrast, liberal commentators (and liberal denominations including Quakers and Unitarians) have emphasized increasing scientific evidence around sexuality, insisting homosexuality is a “natural” disposition rather than chosen lifestyle or pathology, a stance influenced by secular tolerance of sexual diversity and rights. The “proof” texts are reinterpreted accordingly. For instance, the reference in Romans (1:26–27) to “unnatural” sexual behaviour is said to be contrary to one’s *own* nature (e.g., for heterosexuals to partake of homosexual acts). What appears as the only biblical reference to lesbianism in this passage is comprehended as reflecting cultural norms of the time: that women should not assume the dominant heterosexual pose.

Liberal interpretations have generated the development of “Queer” theology suggesting homosexual desire has always been present in human history and reflected in biblical narratives which require reinterpretation. The Queer Bible Commentary, for instance, has construed the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18; 19:1–29) in its cultural context: a narrative not condemning homosexuality, but rape and inhospitality to foreigners. Similarly the censure of homosexuality in Lev 18:22 is understood as part of a holiness code (chs. 17–26) whereby the people of Israel separated themselves from surrounding pagan nations and prohibited

homosexuality as a form of dominance, while the term “abomination” refers to the “unjust.” First Corinthians 6:9–11 is considered not to condemn homosexuals, but same-sex prostitution and pederasty widespread in the Greco-Roman culture in which Apostle Paul ministered. Queer commentaries also point to mistranslations of the word “homosexual” in numerous Bibles (e.g., 1 Tim 1:10) that initially referred to male prostitution and abusive relationships, mistranslations revealing the homophobia of the translator.

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## VI. Islam

Resembling the story to be found in Gen 18:16–19:29, the Qurʾān relates homosexuality to the story of the people of Lot (see S7:80–81; 15:67; 26:165–166; 27:54–55, and 29:28–29). Sura 7:80–81 reads:

And [remember] Lot, when he said unto his people: “Will you commit abominations such as none in all the world has ever done before you? Verily, with lust you approach men instead of women: nay, but you are people given to excesses!”

This passage is generally linked to male homosexuality, and the reference to abomination is commonly understood as anal penetration. Since the Qurʾānic text tells a story in which the people of Lot were punished because of their sins, Charles Pellat (1986) concludes that the dominating opinion among Muslim theologians is that homosexuals should be killed. Consequently, the penalty for homosexuality is stoning and lesbians should be placed under “house arrest until death” (Juynboll).

Several Arabic words can be used for same-sex relations, e.g., *liwāṭ*, *lūṭī*, *fāḥisa* (“abomination”), and *siḥāḳ* (“to rub,” a word commonly used for lesbianism). There is also a distinction between the *mulāwīṭ* (= the active partner) and the *maʿbūn* (= the passive partner).

In Islamic texts it is easy to find a condemnatory attitude towards homosexuality, as well as prescribed punishments for it, but in literary texts and historical accounts it is quite easy to find descriptions of homosexuality and homoeroticism. It is also important to stress that some contemporary scholars have tried to find new ways of understanding Muslim homosexuality. For example, the South African theologian Muhsin Hendrix argues that a voluntary homosexual relationship that is based on love (and not force or rape, as in the story of Lot) is not contrary to Islam. This interpretation is clearly

influenced by contemporary Christian and Jewish traditions regarding homosexuality. When it comes to Western research there is a growing interest in both classical and contemporary literary descriptions of homosexuality (cf., e.g., Al-Samman), and a growing number of studies of LGBT movements and activists have been published in recent years.

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## VII. Literature

The relatively few references to homosexuality in the Bible have continually been drawn on to authorize punitive opposition to homosexual relations in the Western world of Christianity and in its colonial expansions.

It is no surprise, however, given the Bible's authoritative role in Western cultures, that diverse, gay, lesbian and queer writers have continued to challenge its preeminent authority, attempted to use its words to locate same-sex desire within the normative tradition it underpins, or otherwise tried to unearth its fundamental "unorthodoxy" in their own defence (Frontain: 13). A 17th-century text, denounced by the Inquisition and written in Venice by Antonio Rocco, *L'Alciade fanciullo a scola* (Alcibiades boy at school) illustrates clear defiance. This story of homosexual seduction set in the context of classical pederasty, continually dances around implicit references to the biblical story of the destruction of Sodom, yet arguably, "Rocco does not allow the Bible to articulate its mythic discourse against homosexuality ... the author 'silences' the biblical narration. ... Rocco performs the discourse of Sodom, 'erasing' its source, the Bible itself" (Maggi: 42–43).

As examples of authors who otherwise appropriate biblical references in order, perhaps, to align themselves with its cultural resonance, we could turn at the end of the 19th century, to the French sexologist André Raffalovich's theorizations of homoerotics in the works of John of the Cross and Jacopone da Todì. In his *Uranisme et unisexualité: étude sur différentes manifestations de l'instinct sexuel* (1896, Uranism and Unisexuality: A Study of Different Manifestations of the Sexual Instinct) he proposed John the beloved disciple (John 13: 23) as "a

model for devout homosexuals" (Roden: 117), whilst his life-long partner, the English poet John Gray makes reference, e.g., to the love of David for Jonathan (1 Sam 18: 1; 2 Sam 1: 26) in a poem entitled, "Passing the Love of Women" (Roden: 116).

There are increasing numbers of fictional attempts to wrestle with biblically based Christian prohibitions on homosexuality, around the turn of the 20th century; a time when there was an enormous burgeoning of interest in the subject of sex and what was variously called "sexual inversion" or "Uranism." Apart from Raffalovich's treatise, Henry Havelock Ellis's work *Sexual Inversion* appeared in 1897 and Xavier Mayne's *The Intersexes* in 1908. Amongst those works published in English around this period, are E. F. Benson's *David Blaize Trilogy* (1916–24) in which male homosexual desire is acknowledged but ultimately, deliberately sacrificed in a form of *imitatio Christi* (Mounsey: 35–142). Raddclyffe Hall makes a much more red-blooded attempt to claim Christian legitimacy in *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) which is also notable for its biblical references; most strikingly, the main character, Stephen describes her fundamental predicament in biblical terms: "And the Lord set a mark upon Cain" (Hall: 207). The book also plays significantly on a reference to the biblical book of Ruth and its associations with forbidden love between women (Ruth 1: 16; Hall: 207). Hall's wider use of biblical quotations and references, perhaps as effectively as anything in the book, illustrates her sense of isolation from a normative English society that, as the obscenity trial following the publication of her book revealed, tried to refuse her permission to draw on its authoritative words to plead her cause.

More recently Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are not the Only Fruit* (1985), evokes the tragedy of Christian homophobia. Juxtaposing different forms of discourse alongside running references to biblical narratives of election and mission, she too effectively denies the biblical narrative "a position of supreme or sole authority" (Brown: 210). In the end, her tone is compassionate but there is also a clear sense of departure: "she is as willing to allow the 'holy' their Bible as she is determined to assert the value of her own" (Frontain: 4).

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## VIII. Film

**1. Influence of the Hollywood Production Code on Biblical Epics.** The depiction of homosexuality in biblical film, particularly in the well-known Hollywood biblical epics produced in the United States, has depended on the legality or social acceptability of homosexuality in film in general.

Roughly from 1933 to 1966, all Hollywood films were subject to an explicit and rarely challenged Motion Picture Production Code, which all of the major studios adhered to on penalty of moral outrage and possible boycott from powerful Protestant and Catholic interest groups. The Production Code forbade depictions of what it called "sexual perversion," which included homosexuality.

As a result of the ubiquity of the Production Code for mainstream films in the United States, cultural assessments of American films can be roughly divided into three distinct eras: Pre-Code, that is before 1933; Production Code era films, ca. 1933–66; and Post-Code, or films made since 1966 under the ratings regime of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).

Prior to the implementation of the Hollywood Production Code in 1933, American filmmakers were often freer to display homosexuality. In biblical films, homosexual characters were often used as a means of evoking ancient decadence against which the moral agency of Christianity and Judaism could act in opposition. A notable example would be Charles Laughton's portrayal of Nero in *The Sign of the Cross* (dir. Cecil B. DeMille, 1932, US).

During the Production Code era, homosexuality in biblical film often had to be broadly hinted at in order to avoid censure, but could nevertheless be evoked in male characters through coded behavior of flamboyance or effeminate camp, again as an example of ancient decadence. Many biblical villains – Roman emperors, Egyptian slave masters – were subject to this characterization as vaguely queer. Nero (Peter Ustinov) in *Quo Vadis* (dir. Mervyn LeRoy, 1951, US/IT) and the effeminate slave master Baka (Vicent Price) in *The Ten Commandments* (dir. DeMille, 1956, US) provide examples of carefully coded gayness in Code era biblical epics.

During the post-Code era, biblical films often did not portray homosexuality more openly, despite the loosening of official strictures, for fear of

losing religious audiences. Instead, these films retained the coded references to homosexuality of the Production Code-era films. Depictions of King Herod in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (dir. Norman Jewison, 1971, US) and *The Passion of the Christ* (dir. Mel Gibson, 2004, US/IT) stand out as continuing this tradition of the effeminate but sexually indeterminate villain.

**2. Biblical Documentaries and Narrative Films as Part of the Culture Wars.** In documentaries and some narrative films made during the American culture wars (ca. 1980–2010) homosexuality became one of the primary loci of contention over the moral direction of society, sometimes in conversation with biblical texts. In both fiction films and documentaries, homosexuality was often less a description of a sexual behavior, orientation, or type of relationship, than a symbol of a morality in society.

Many anti-LGBT films that were purported to be about policy or public health issues were actually discursions on the filmmakers' beliefs about the Bible. Some mention the Bible directly, some do not, but most are based on conservative Christian perceptions of the Bible as being hostile toward homosexuality.

One of the most infamous examples is a video by an unknown director released in 1993 by Jeremiah Films called *Gay Rights/Special Rights: Inside the Gay Agenda* (US). The film warns of a unified conspiracy to infiltrate schools, churches, and government to recruit children to the "homosexual lifestyle." It features expert testimony from public policy figures, all with ties to the American religious right, explaining the supposed dangers of homosexuality, from child abuse to the spread of AIDS. The talking head footage is intercut with video footage from the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. The footage shows people in flamboyant states of dress and undress, dancing, marching, and giving loud and angry speeches. Footage of the march is accompanied by ominous music, and is edited to make the event look like both an orgy and a Fascist rally. Although not released in theaters, the film was widely circulated on videotape in churches, is freely available online, and has shaped the opinions of thousands of Christians negatively toward the growing LGBT rights movement.

Partially in response to this film and other right-wing "biblically-based" propaganda designed to frighten Christians about homosexuality, pro-LGBT filmmakers began releasing their own films humanizing LGBT people and making the case for their acceptance in church and society.

Among these were films denouncing ex-gay "conversion therapy," including the documentaries

*One Nation Under God* (dir. Teodoro Maniaci/Francine Rzezniak, 1993, US) and *This is What Love in Action Looks Like* (dir. Morgan Jon Fox, 2011, US), as well as narrative films *Saved!* (dir. Brian Dannelly, 2004, US), *C.R.A.Z.Y.* (dir. Jean-Marc Vallée, 2005, CA), and *Save Me* (dir. Jennifer Getzinger, 2006, US); films about the damage religion can cause between Christian parents and LGBT children, including *Family Values: An American Tragedy* (dir. Pam Walton, 1996, US), and *Family Fundamentals* (dir. Arthur Dong, 2002, US); and films confronting religious objections to same-sex marriage, such as *Saints and Sinners* (dir. Abigail Honor/Yan Vizinberg, 2004, US), *Tying the Knot* (dir. Jim de Sève, 2004, US), and *8: The Mormon Proposition* (dir. Reed Cowan/Steven Greenstreet, 2010, US).

Among the best of this genre of gay religious “apologetic” films are Daniel Karslake’s *For the Bible Tells Me So* (2007, US), which intersperses stories of Christian parents and their gay children with liberal counter-interpretations of the biblical passages traditionally used to condemn homosexuality. Another film that addresses the issue of the Bible and religious life is Sandi Simcha Dubowski’s *Trembling Before G-d* (2001, IL/FR/US), an account of LGBT people in Orthodox Jewish communities. Both of these films have been used extensively in faith communities as positive conversation starters about LGBT issues in relation to scripture.

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See also → Gay Men’s Interpretation of the Bible;  
→ Gender; → Lesbian Interpretation of the Bible;  
→ Queer Reception of the Bible; → Sex and Sexuality

## Homs

→ Emesa

## Honegger, Arthur

Arthur Honegger (1892–1955) was a Swiss-French composer, in whose oeuvre biblical themes and texts often play a substantial role. He wrote oratorios, operas, incidental music, film music, symphonic music, songs, and music for the piano.

Honegger’s incidental music for René Morax’ biblical stage play about the life of King David, *Le roi David* (1921) became a great success and gave him international recognition, prompting Honegger and Morax to make a concert version of the mu-

sic with a narrator to link together the musical items (for soloists, chorus, and orchestra). A few years later he composed incidental music for another biblical stage play by Morax, *Judith* (1924–25, based on the book of Judith) which was revised as an opera (1925) and as an *action musicale* for concert performance (1927).

Honegger’s probably most famous choral work is the dramatic oratorio *Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher* (1935, *Joan of Arc at the Stake*; to a text by Paul Claudel), which was first performed in Basel in 1938 and to which the authors added a prologue during the war. Claudel’s text features a number of biblical allusions, sometimes ironic, sometimes serious, and correspondingly set variously by Honegger. The vaguely biblical medieval chant for advent *Aspicimus a longe* (From afar I see the coming of the might of the Lord) is sung in scene 8, using both text and chant melody, introduced by the flute playing the melody (Honegger textbook: 59). In the last scene, at the stake, Francis of Assisi’s vaguely biblical *Canticle of Brother Sun* is quoted and at the very end of the dramatic oratorio, John 15:13, “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends,” is paraphrased as a conclusion to the drama (ibid.: 76). The prologue (added in 1944) adapts Gen 1:2 to France, symbolically covered in darkness (ibid.: 29) alluding to the Nazi occupation) and also quotes other short biblical statements.

Honegger’s *Symphonie liturgique* (1945–46) in three movements programmatically describes the fight of modern man against barbarity referencing Latin medieval liturgy as well as the Bible. The first movement is called “Dies irae,” expressing the destruction of everything, whereas the second movement, “De profundis clamavi,” refers to Ps 130 and the finale, “Dona nobis pacem,” concludes with a utopian vision of brotherhood and love (Spratt).

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## Honey

Honey (MT *dēbaš*; LXX μέλι), one of the seven products of the land of Israel (Deut 8:8), can refer either to syrup made from the fruit or sap of the date palm tree, or to bee honey. A terminological